

Cavalcade of Counties—

WASP-WAISTED

Passaic's Hourglass Shape Divides as Much as It Connects County's Hill Country and Factory Area

BY JOHN T. CUNNINGHAM

ELBRIDGE GERRY'S philosophy that land areas should be manipulated in a manner most beneficial to politicians found full favor in February, 1837, when the boys sat down in Trenton to establish Passaic County. If ever there was a gerrymandered county it is wasp-waisted Passaic.

South Jersey votes held back Passaic County until Atlantic County could be created as a counter balancing vote. Moreover, by linking the little-settled country north of Pompton Lakes with the heavily industrial regions along the Passaic River, South Jersey politicians killed continued clamoring for two logical new North Jersey districts—proposed as "Pompton" and "Paterson" counties.

The projected "Pompton" and "Paterson" counties clearly recognized the vast differences between the rugged hill country and the upcoming factory area in the crook of the Passaic River. But only the one hourglass-shaped county slipped by the Legislature—and few pondered the fact that North Passaic's forestlands had little in common with Paterson's factories. Intervening years haven't made the two areas on either side of the narrow two-mile-wide connecting corridor

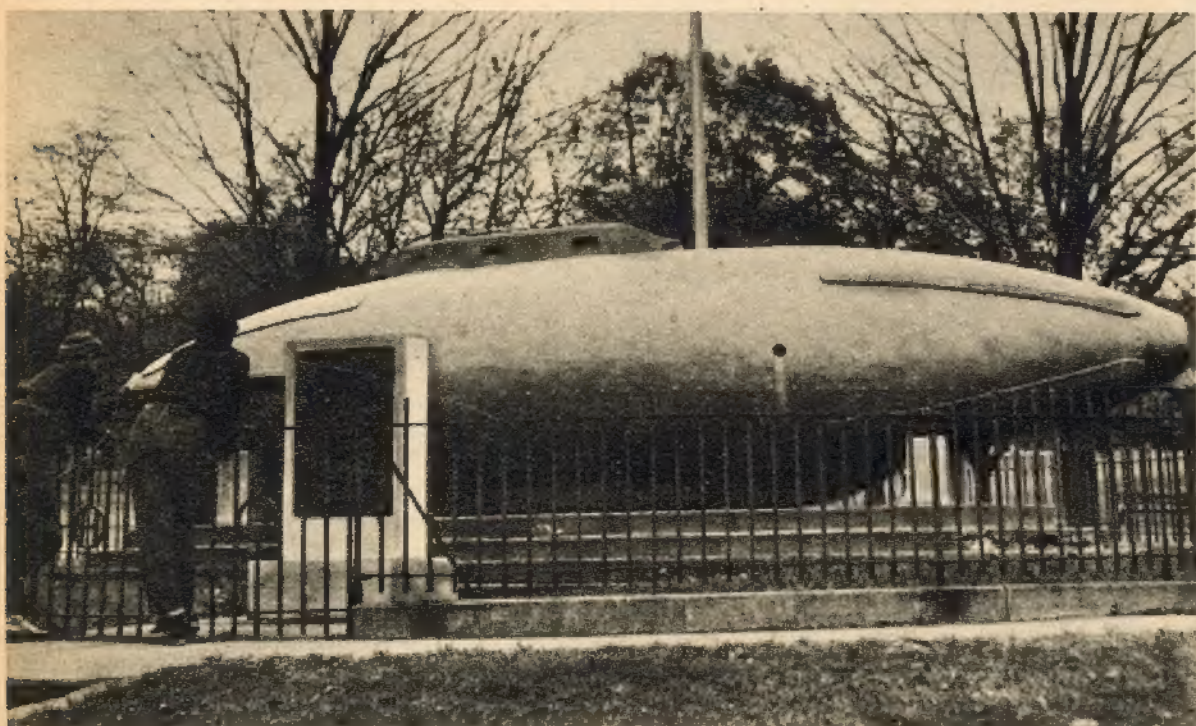
completely one. The corridor divides as much as it connects.

LONG before 1837 the Passaic River brought Dutch settlers inland, the earliest of record being Hartman Michielsen, who bought an island in the river in 1678 from Captehan Peeters, an Indian. Two years later two Dutch missionaries visited the "Great Falls" and wrote awe-filled accounts of its wonder. Then in 1682 14 Dutch families acquired the Acquackanonk Tract (comprising most of modern Clifton, Passaic and Paterson).

Arent Schuyler and Anthony Brockholts bought 5,500 acres near Pompton in 1697 and all of the land in modern Passaic County had been purchased before 1711, including the acres on the rolling highlands to the north. Settlers stopped at the "little falls" in 1711, Simeon VanWinkle built his "white house" on a river ford two miles below the "great falls" before 1719. By 1730 German and Dutch families lived in the rough hill country, among them John Jacob Kanouse of Holland (whose name is today perpetuated in Kanouse Mountain).

Cornelius Board, tramping up and down the Ramapo Valley seeking cop-

This is the sixteenth of a series of articles dealing with New Jersey's 21 counties, sketching their past and present with, now and then a peek into their future. The counties will be considered in alphabetical order each week. Next Sunday: Salem County.



Paterson's memorial to John P. Holland, an early developer of submarines, is one of his actual 19-ton models, built in 1881.



Still standing below the Clinton Reservoir is this forge, a reminder of a once-rich iron mining section in Northern New Jersey.

per, found iron instead and built a forge in the valley before 1740. That years the Ogdens of Newark bought land from Board and, styling themselves the "Ringwood Company," commenced the smelting of iron in 1741.

WORD of the rich iron deposits spread to England, where the American Company (sometimes called the "London Company") commissioned an energetic German, Peter Hasenclever, to represent them in American iron ventures. Hasenclever acquired 50,000 acres, including Ringwood. He imported 535 Germans to run his mines and iron works and built a thriving iron community at Ringwood in 1764 and 1765. Roads spread through the forestland to connect the Ringwood mines with Pompton, Charlottesburg and New Foundland furnaces.

Hasenclever lived like a feudal lord among the mountains, while in the surrounding forest deeply religious German colonists eagerly welcomed Rev. Ferdinand Farmer, the indefatigable Catholic priest who conducted services at Macopin (Echo Lake) in the 1750s. Father Farmer's services in those North Jersey hills were among the earliest Catholic masses in New Jersey.

John Jacob Faesch succeeded Hasenclever in 1769 and Faesch in turn yielded control to Robert Erskine in 1771. Erskine's diligent mine efforts provided munitions for the Revolutionary cause, and the young Scotch-

man rendered yeoman service as a mapmaker for the Continental Army.

GENERAL WASHINGTON often slept in what is now Passaic County. The main American army encamped at Pompton, Wayne and Totowa in the Summer and Fall of 1780. Washington and his officers lived in the Theunis Dey Mansion at Preakness from July 1 to 29 and from October 9 to 27, both 1780, and the general hurried back again in January, 1781, after the abortive Jersey Brigade mutiny at Pompton on January 20.

Nevertheless, the most important visit of all possibly was on July 10, 1778, when the general stopped for lunch at the foot of the majestic "Totowa Falls." One of his officers, young Alexander Hamilton, particularly exulted in the pounding volume of the falls as they plunged 70 feet into their rocky gorge.

Thirteen years later Hamilton, Secretary of the Treasury in Washington's Cabinet, sent to Congress his vital "Report on Manufactures." He insisted that the new nation could never be truly free until it manufactured its own products. Possibly his mind saw an industrial city at the foot of the falls he had first seen as an Army colonel. Certainly he rejoiced on November 22, 1791, when New Jersey's Governor William Paterson signed the charter for the Society for Establishing Useful Manufactures.

The Society (even then abbreviated
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PASSAIC COUNTY



Passaic River's great falls at Paterson provided power for Alexander Hamilton's Society for Useful Manufactures, founded in 1791.



Passaic, textile and metal products center, pictured from the air. It was known as Acquackanonk when settled by Dutch traders in 1678.



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as S. U. M.) invited proposals from New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania—and Hamilton offered no objection to an engineer's declaration that the falls offered "the best situation in the world." An S. U. M. committee accepted that appraisal on May 17, 1792, and named their projected city in honor of Governor Paterson.

The Society hired Major Pierre Charles L'Enfant to design the city. L'Enfant sketched elaborate plans—streets 200 feet wide and all that sort of thing—but the S. U. M. budget failed to match L'Enfant's imagination and the major took off with his plans (which later proved very valuable when he laid out Washington, D. C., in 1801).

Peter Colt, treasurer of Connecticut, succeeded L'Enfant in February, 1793. He started digging a raceway to lead the powerful river to the Society's cotton mill (which became known as the "Bull Mill" because Colt operated it with oxen while awaiting water

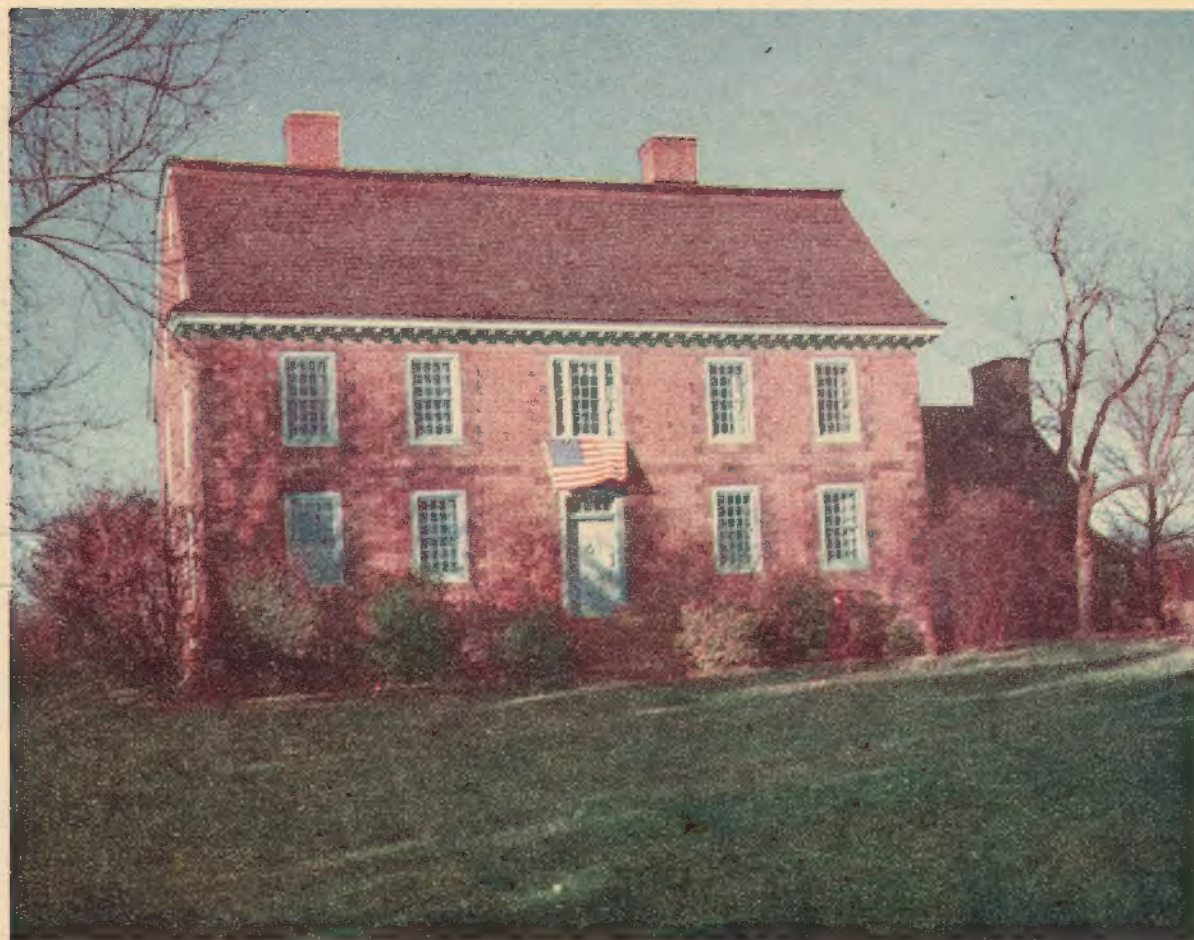
power). America had few skilled craftsmen; Colt imported them from England, Scotland and Ireland.

Gloom descended on the budding city when the S. U. M. ran out of money in 1796, but individual operators came to the city to lease S. U. M. property. John Clark, for example, started Paterson's first machine shop in about 1800. John Parke built a small cotton mill of his own, then in 1810 built a large brick stone mill.

PARKE disdained sending his products to New York via sloops tied up at Acquackanonk Landing; instead, he packed his cotton in "gorgeously painted" covered wagons and went overland to Philadelphia. It cost more, but Parke found it paid to advertise. Business boomed for Parke and the city's six or seven other cotton millers in the War of 1812, but peace collapsed the industry. A new tariff in 1816 pumped new life back into the mills; Paterson's ever-recurring boom and bust cycles were under way.



(Ground views by Dorer; air photos by Corbitt from Meller-Hov)



LEFT: Paterson's City Hall tower (upper left) and Passaic County Court House dome appear in air-view of city famed as birthplace of American Industrial planning.

ABOVE: Historic Dey Mansion at Preakness served as Washington's headquarters on two occasions in 1780 while the Colonial Army was encamped in Preakness Valley.

A dozen cotton mills used S. U. M. power in 1825 and twice that many used Passaic Falls power in 1829. Moneyed men invested and built fine homes on the hillsides surrounding Paterson. The big industrial leaders scorned free schools (although they set up Sunday schools where youngsters working in the mills could study without ruining production). In 1832 Paterson had 20 "pay" schools, one free school.

Paterson and Acquackanonk came to a mutually satisfying break in 1831. Paterson decided it wanted to keep its tax revenues; Acquackanonk leaders found satisfaction in the thriving trade carried on by Passaic River steamers which touched their docks—and saw no reason why Paterson votes should run them.

A CHOLERA epidemic struck the Passaic River lands in 1832, killing 140 in Paterson alone, but it failed to stop completion that year of the Morris

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New Jersey's half of Greenwood Lake, popular for its recreational features, pictured from eastern shore.



(ard plane)



LEFT: Looking west toward Wanaque Reservoir from new road over the Ramapos from Oakland to Erskine Lake.

ABOVE: Industrial Paterson stretches below viewers at observation point on Garret Mountain Reservation.

PASSAIC COUNTY

(Continued from Preceding Page)

Canal and the Paterson and Hudson River Railroad (Paterson to Jersey City). Paterson absorbed coal brought in by the Morris Canal and sent increasing amounts of finished goods to tidewater on the railroad.

The new transportation eventually helped up-county farmers, too, by opening great new markets. The Morris Canal boosted Little Falls industry and gave it enough prominence to entice Robert Beattie's carpet mill out from New York in 1842. Only Acquackanonk (Passaic) suffered, because the canal and railroad doomed its dockside trade.

Meanwhile, in Paterson the Colt family took over complete control of the S. U. M. by purchasing 1,991 of the Society's 2,620 shares before 1814. Roswell L. Colt, largest shareholder and "the greatest of the Colts," became Society governor in 1814 and served until his death in 1856.

Other Colts had genius, too. John Colt started to make cotton duck in Paterson in 1827, being the first man to substitute cotton for flax in sail duck. Samuel Colt first made his Colt "revolver" in the Paterson "Gun Mill" in 1836. Sam's gun seemed a failure so he sold his last automatic to an Indian trader in 1842—and when the government finally recognized the gun's merits in 1847, Sam had no model from which to work. He redesigned the revolver and resumed manufacture in Connecticut.

Another Colt, Christopher, established Paterson's first silk mill in 1839, but the true "father" of Paterson silk was John Ryle. Colt sold his silk plant to George W. Murray, who brought Ryle from England to superintend operations. Ryle set up a battery of silk looms in 1842, bought out Murray in 1846. The "Silk City" was born.

COTTON supremacy gravitated from Paterson to New England, but the mechanical "know-how" and the pool of experienced hands remained behind. Thus, when Tom Rogers and others began to make locomotives in the 1830s, Paterson had an edge on all the nation. The simple fact is that Paterson's workmen could make anything. It was no anomaly that Paterson became the "Iron City" at the same time it became the "Silk City."

Paterson and Passaic County were synonymous before the Civil War. No one challenged the city's right to become county seat in 1837. Seventy per cent of Passaic's 16,734 population lived in or adjacent to Paterson in 1840—a ratio which continued unchecked for almost 50 more years.

Amidst the clanging of factories and the whirring of looms, Paterson became a city in 1851. Its 11,341 people had great pride. In fact, too much pride and too much sense to permit aldermen to continue wearing the leather badges on their hats which proclaimed: "ALDERMAN, FIRST WARD" (or any other ward). Laughter rose above machine noises. The badges disappeared.

Down the river, folks living in sight of Dundee Island clung to their quaint name of Acquackamunk and stubbornly demanded high prices for their land. Finally, after 30 years of fruitless attempts to harness the river as Paterson had done 70 years before, the Dundee Manufacturing Co. gave in to exorbitant demands and bought two key farms in 1858. The company built a 450-foot dam across the river and let it be known open arms awaited manufacturers.

A small brick and anvil factory responded initially, and the New York Steam-Engine Co. works, a wire mill and a print works followed. By 1873, when Acquackanonk incorporated as the city of Passaic, about 15 mills fringed the Dundee water power canal. Nevertheless, fewer than 1,000 people lived in the city.

ALL Passaic County expanded in the last three decades of the 19th Century. Wayne Township boasted in 1880 of the Laflin & Rand Powder Co. (capacity, 600 kegs daily). Mountain View had four brick factories producing more than 120,000 bricks daily. The Beattie company greatly enlarged its carpet plant at Little Falls and four other mills and an iron moulding plant built nearby.

North of the "wasp waist," iron and water paced the advance. Martin Ryerson and family took over the old Ringwood works in 1807 and operated them until 1853, when Peter Cooper bought the 22,000-acre property. Cooper, New York glue magnate, inventor and promoter, pushed the old mines to their greatest prominence—aided by Abram Hewitt, who merged his personal and business fortunes with Cooper in 1855 by marrying Peter's daughter Amelia.

The Cooper-Hewitt combine made the mines pay. The 1880 census showed a total of 896,000 long tons had been taken from 20 Ringwood mines. Some estimates say 2,500,000 long tons have been taken from the mines since colonial days—a great percentage of it during management by Cooper and Hewitt interests. The mines, worked sporadically since 1931, now are once again being studied as an ore source.

LATE in the 1870s, Newark leaders cast envious eyes on the crystal-clear waters in the Pequannock and Wanaque watersheds, convinced of the practicality of tapping upper Passaic to provide drinking water. However, while city fathers debated the proposal, a group known as the East Jersey Water Co. quietly bought up most of the land in the Pequannock watershed.

Accordingly, when Newark finally decided in 1889 to build reservoirs, it found East Jersey with a monopoly on the land. The city had to negotiate with the water company to build reservoirs at Oak Ridge, Echo Lake, Clinton and Macopin at a total cost of \$6,000,000. East Jersey lived up to its agreement and by May, 1892, the reservoirs were built and a 48-inch steel



One of the housing developments in fast-growing Clifton which, with a population of 65,000, is second to Paterson in the county.



Historic Ringwood Manor House, former Cooper-Hewitt family property, is in Ringwood Manor Park, a 500-acre recreational area.

pipe carried Passaic County water 21 miles to Newark faucets.

Construction of another reservoir at Canistear before 1900 and improvements to the other reservoirs through the years have raised the Pequannock storage area to more than 11,000,000,000 gallons. All of it came under Newark control in 1900 when court decisions forced the East Jersey Water Co. to convey its water rights to the city.

Even greater plans engrossed Newark water men in 1907 when the city revived study of the Wanaque watershed as the location of a 50,000,000-gallon-per-day reservoir. This time Passaic County interests stood in the way, alarmed that the Pequannock watershed had slipped completely away from the county.

Eventually eight municipalities joined to build Wanaque Reservoir—

Paterson, Passaic and Clifton in Passaic County; Newark, Montclair, Bloomfield and Glen Ridge in Essex, and Kearny in Hudson. Much legal maneuvering delayed the project, most of it occasioned by the stubborn refusal of large property owners to give up land which they wanted to preserve as grazing pasture for their prize cattle.

Nevertheless, on November 23, 1920, ground was broken for the tremendous reservoir capable of supplying 100,000,000 gallons of water daily. A dam 1,500 feet long and 100 feet high was completed in 1928 and water started to back up through the valley. Work on the \$26,000,000 project was completed in 1930.

Paterson, "fastest-growing city in the East" in 1880, had a tremendous influx of emigrants in the 1880s. Emigrant trains stopped nightly in town,



Pompton's picturesque falls, outlet for Pompton Lakes. The Dutch settlers were attracted to surrounding region by iron deposits.

and many of the newcomers also made their way to mushrooming Passaic, where the population jumped from about 1,000 in 1873 to 6,632 in 1880 and 27,777 in 1900. Passaic's famed woolen mills, started in the 1890s, led the advance.

Locomotive production started to decline in Paterson during the 1890s, but silk production and silk processing took up the slack. Paterson also became one of New Jersey's prime shopping centers, with scores of small shops and supply houses lining the city's old streets.

Celebration of the S. U. M.'s 100th anniversary in 1891 served as the occasion to "remember in passing"—to remember that the process for making paper in a continuous roll was developed in Paterson, that a Paterson man invented the steam radiator, that Paterson made half the world's mosquito netting supply in the 1880s, that Paterson made nearly all the railroads' rotary snow plows and a big percentage of the nation's fire engines.

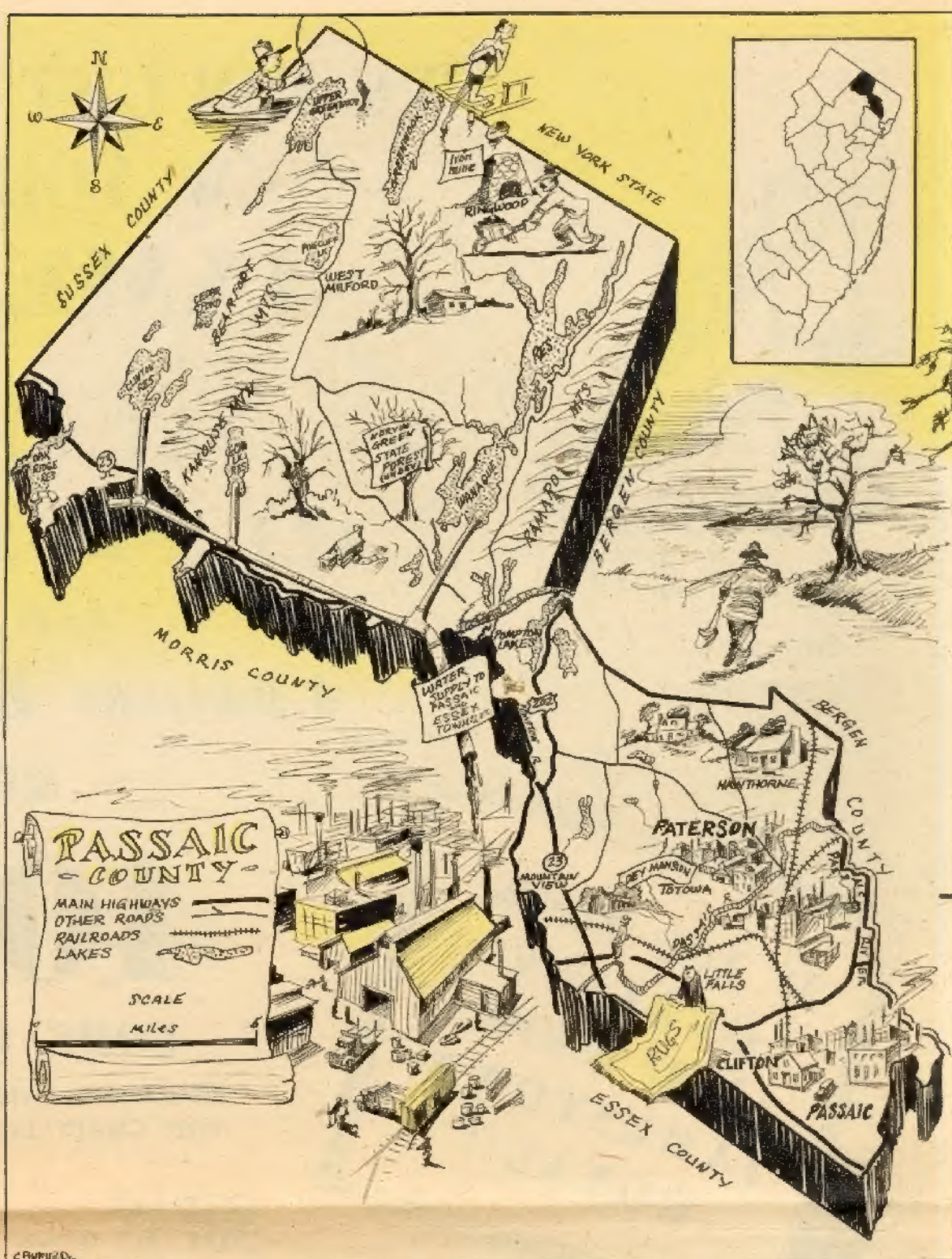
SOME remembered John Philip Holland, the supposedly eccentric Paterson schoolmaster who on July 23, 1878, tried out in the Passaic River the first submarine. Naturally, his 1881 launching of the "Fenian Ram" (paid for by Irish Fenian sympathizers) raised him in the city's estimation—

but not until World War I did Paterson (and the world) understand the true significance of John Philip Holland.

Active in the S. U. M. celebration was Garret A. Hobart, prominent businessman and politician who had been a lawyer in Paterson since 1866. Hobart's political star ascended rapidly in the early 1890s, climaxed in 1896 when he was elected Vice President to serve with President William McKinley. Hobart's death in 1899 cut short a promising career in national politics.

Everything else took a back seat in 1902 and 1903 when the elements tried vainly to eradicate Paterson. First a fire in February, 1902, swept through 54 acres and destroyed 456 buildings. Three weeks later violent floodwaters surged through the streets and soon after a tornado twisted through the city. Finally, in October, 1903, flood waters again inundated the city. Miraculously, however, in every instance the silk mills escaped damage.

THE elements couldn't shut the mills, but a violent strike in 1913 could; all of the city's 350 mills came to a standstill. Led by the International Workers of the World (I. W. W.), Paterson's 25,000 silk workers struck. Mill owners decried the "red" strike leadership (and undoubtedly there was some such leadership), but the strike



Only two miles wide at its narrowest point, industry-rich Passaic County possesses some of finest vacation lands in New Jersey.

had roots reaching back to 1794, when Paterson had its first strike. Intermittent trouble through the 19th Century pointed up the tremendous economic and social gulf between worker and mill owner. Industrial strife was inevitable, but the fact is that both labor and management suffered bitterly from the five-months-long strike in 1913.

Silk management began an exodus from the city in 1925, but in 1926 another Paterson industrial era began when the then little-known Wright Aeronautical Corp. moved into a silk mill to start making airplane engines. Paterson went into its fourth cycle: Cotton, locomotives, silk, airplane engines. The eggs still remained largely in one basket.

As Paterson and Passaic grew, they spilled over into the farmlands of Clifton, whose greatest early prominence had been from 1886 to 1891 when a race track flourished in the village. Since it proclaimed its independent status in 1917, however, Clifton has had an amazing growth. Even in the doleful 1929-1934 days, 1,500 new homes were built in Clifton; 5,000 more were added from 1934 to 1940. The years since World War II have accelerated the increase. Today Clifton's 65,000 population is second to Paterson in the county. Textile, steel and chemical plants prosper within its borders.

Paterson remains the county's greatest city. Hundreds of smaller industries hum in factories where once a single product was made. City fathers believe that is good; too long has Paterson risen and fallen on a single industry—the latest blow being when Wright moved out after World War II. Silk is still a major industry, and textiles in general comprise the greatest bulk of production. Down river, in Passaic, the vital woolen mills share industrial honors with the production of mechanical rubber goods and—interestingly enough—Passaic city is the greatest producer of handkerchiefs in the nation.

NORTH of the waist, Passaic County possesses some of New Jersey's finest vacation lands. Exceptional scenery rewards the visitor who climbs a mountain range to view Wanaque Reservoir or the Bearfort and Kanouse valleys. Some of the lakes close to Paterson have become all-year living centers; others bustle with sound and excitement only in the Summer months.

The automobile has helped tie north and south together, although a high percentage of Passaic County's 340,000 residents still live south of Pompton. Actually, however, what was political expediency in 1837 is a blessing in 1953. Diversity never hurt any county.